



Sideeffect is a Not for Profit organisation promoting drug education in schools.

Chris Waterman, David Hobbs and Rod Bridge with the Sideeffect interactive bus.

EMMA DAVIES

IN 2013, Preston Bridge died after consuming a synthetic drug at his high school ball after-party.

His father Rodney Bridge established Sideeffect along with former Eagles champion Chris Waterman and corporate businessman David Hobbs, with the aim to educate about the dangers of synthetic drug use.

"Sideeffect is the legacy of my son who lost his life at the age of 16 by making one uninformed decision," Mr Bridge said.

"Let's stop our kids from playing Russian roulette and arm them with knowledge," he said.

In 2015, Mr Bridge infiltrated Chinese drug gangs exporting to Australia and saw firsthand the deadly ingredients used in production of synthetic substances.

The dangerous stunt proved that large quantities of synthetic drugs could easily be smuggled into the country undetected by sniffer dogs.

"We can make an impression on kids because we tell them what's in these substances," Mr Hobbs said.

"Once they hear that meth's got battery acid, phosphorous, lime - all these things that you'd buy at Bunnings - they don't want to go down that path."

In July the program was launched to 2600 students in WA at Churchlands Senior High School.

"Let's stop our kids from playing Russian roulette and arm them with knowledge."

"Our goal is to open up conversation between parents, their children and families alike," Mr Hobbs said.

"Between 75 to 80 per cent of kids that have seen our presentation then talk to mum and dad about it. So we know that it works."

The United Nations Office on Drugs and *Crime World Drug Report 2017* puts Australia among the largest consumers of meth in the world and a study from the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre showed regional areas account for 40 per cent of methamphetamine-related deaths.

Sideeffect is tackling this statistic and using sport as an educational tool to reach regional and Indigenous youth.

"Sport gives us a great platform and excuse to visit these remote communities to deliver such an important message," Mr Waterman said.

"Our very graphic presentation is hard hitting and straight to the point.

"By the end of this presentation you will be well informed of the dangers of these drugs, and you will realise you have One Life, One Choice."

Sideeffect is also developing an online curriculum called the Orange Student Card and has built an interactive bus to take the

presentation into the community.

"We wanted it to be an open discussion," Mr Hobbs said.

"Ice costs Australia \$4.4 billion in health care, crime and economic value each year."

Mr Hobbs believes an early intervention strategy is needed to combat the problem.

"The Sideeffect strategy emulates a strategy used in Montana - which went from the 5th largest meth consumer in the world to the 39th in two years," Mr Hobbs said.

The Montana Meth Project used hard hitting television, radio, print, online, and social media campaigns to communicate the risks of meth use.

The project is credited for the 63 per cent decline in teen meth use in Montana since 2005.

"Somebody in Australian Government needs to stand up and listen and look at this strategy because it works. Montana would be no different to Australia," Mr Hobbs said.